

Below is an excerpt from Andover's 2001 Open Space and Recreation Plan. The entire Open Space & Recreation document is available for reference at the Memorial Hall Library or can be purchased at the Community Development and Planning Office located at the Andover Town Offices.

SECTION 1 - PLAN SUMMARY

The 2001 Open Space and Recreation Plan builds on the work of Andover's previous plans done in 1970, 1976, 1983, 1986, 1989, and most recently the 1998 draft plan. The plan incorporates the Open Space and Recreation Plan requirements of the State's Division of Conservation Service's "Open Space Planner's Workbook,"¹ including the following details:

- an overview of Andover from a regional perspective;
- a history of the community, an analysis of demographic changes and growth and development patterns;
- a description of Andover's natural environment, and scenic and unique resources;
- an inventory of conservation and recreation lands;
- conservation and recreation goals and objectives;
- an analysis of recreation, management and resource protection needs;
- a five-year action plan outlining recommendations from the analysis.

A committee representing many of the town's departments, various conservation groups, athletic organizations and business interests reaffirmed the goals and action plan of the 1989 Conservation and Recreation Plan² with an added emphasis on 1) resolving the lingering issue of siting additional playing fields for the town's soccer and baseball leagues and 2) improving the accessibility for the disabled to Andover's recreational areas.

A few sections and maps have been added to the report and the sections have been reorganized to comply with the state's format for Open Space and Recreation plans. Statistics have been updated and certain goals and action plan steps referring to the acquisition or protection of specific properties have been eliminated as those properties have either been protected or developed.

The goals and recommendations for action focus on the preservation of water quality in surface and ground water, protecting green way corridors and preservation and sense of open space, and providing recreational opportunities for all residents.

¹"Open Space Planner's Workbook", Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, last revised February 1993.

² Referred to as the 1989 plan in this document.

SECTION 8 - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives build on the general goal statements presented in Section 6; many are carried over from previous open space reports and plans. These goals and objectives were also used as a basis for developing the Five-Year Action Plan in Section 9.

GOAL #1 - Preserve Ecological Balance

As the rapid sub-urbanization of Andover proceeds, it is vital to its total well-being that the natural systems upon which all its citizens depend are not needlessly abused. This means protecting water supplies, both local and regional, guiding development away from sensitive areas like wetlands, floodplains and areas of poor soil capability, preventing degradation because of pollution and erosion, and preserving outstanding natural features, particularly water bodies, as well as endangered habitats and sites of historical or archaeological significance.

Objectives:

- A. Protect town water supplies by acquiring all of the remaining undeveloped Fish Brook and Haggetts Pond lowlands;
- B. Protect the remainder of the water supply watershed from harmful development by means of acquisition or special constraints on use;
- C. Identify and protect areas critically significant to the groundwater resources of the town and its neighbors, which have present or potential or stand-by water supply capability;
- D. Continue strict enforcement of the Wetlands Protection Act and Andover Wetlands Bylaw;
- E. Refine and strictly enforce the erosion and sedimentation controls in the town's subdivision regulations;
- F. Define more specifically the means of protection of open spaces and natural features in the town's zoning and subdivision regulations. Review those regulations with the objectives of increasing environmental protection and decreasing the adverse environmental impacts of development;
- G. Develop a method of preserving adequate open space, wetlands and other outstanding natural features in and around industrial areas (for instance, a patch of laurel or a stand of native trees);
- H. Adopt more specific guidelines for the safe and clean discharge of storm drainage on the part of the town (for example, measures to prevent siltation and petroleum products pollution of streams and wetlands);
- I. Minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides;
- J. Explore the use of conservation land trusts, the Community Preservation Act and other land conservation techniques to preserve open space while guiding appropriate development;
- K. Encourage the acquisition of conservation easements by the town and private open space groups.

GOAL #2 - ENCOURAGE OPEN SPACE ENJOYMENT AND UTILIZATION

Open space preservation should guide the town's programs. The town needs to expand the opportunities for outdoor recreation and enjoyment so that those opportunities are available to all citizens. Open spaces and recreation programs should be provided for all ages and groups.

Objectives:

- A. Publicize this plan. Prepare and distribute more informational material relative to available public open space and active recreational opportunities and programs, such as brochures;
- B. Encourage involvement in the community gardens program;
- C. Attempt to link open space areas by means of trails. Continue to try to establish a town-wide trail network;
- D. Encourage appropriate open space uses while discouraging abuse. This means attempting to balance user needs so that no group is shut out and open space areas are not pre-empted unfairly;
- E. Support and encourage groups who use public open spaces appropriately and those who will voluntarily improve and enhance these areas, such as scout troops, garden clubs and school children.
- F. Support and encourage more recreational programs such as the sport of “orienteering” and organized youth activities that are compatible with undeveloped open space resources.

GOAL #3 - ENHANCE “THE TOWN BEAUTIFUL”

Andover's attractiveness and desirability as a place to live and work depend in large part on its "open" qualities. Every effort needs to be made to ensure green areas at critical locations and to guide the quality of development insofar as possible for visual enhancement.

Objectives:

- A. Identify, protect and maintain by available means outstanding natural features, endangered habitats, archaeologically important sites and green and open spaces at critical locations, such as traffic islands at intersections;
- B. Improve methods which the Planning Board can effectively use to design development within subdivisions so as to preserve not only natural features, such as wetlands and scenic areas, but also usable recreational open space;
- C. Initiate and/or support open space maintenance programs, such as beautification, through federal, state, or local efforts.

GOAL #4 - Protect River Corridors

All of the above goals are well served by protection of and access to river corridors throughout the town: not only the Shawsheen and Merrimack, but especially Fish Brook, which is a substantial contributor to the town's water supply and the Skug River (part of the Ipswich River watershed), which contributes to the water supplies of downstream communities.

Objectives:

- A. Acquire or protect by easement wherever possible the bank of the major rivers, streams and ponds of the town;
- B. Establish and maintain trails along rivers where possible;
- C. Plan for utilization of accessible riverbanks. Boat launching facilities could be developed. Water sports programs could be devised.

GOAL #5 - BE RESPONSIVE TO REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The tendency to concentrate effort and attention on purely local concerns needs to be balanced. What we do in Andover may effect not only our immediate neighbors in the Merrimack Valley, but potential open space users from the more densely populated Metropolitan Boston area. The town needs to keep informed about regional problems and plans, and to work cooperatively with regional and state agencies.

Objectives:

- A. Make Andover's representative on the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission aware of Andover's open space and recreation assets as well as its goals and objectives;
- B. Make Andover aware of regional open space recreation goals through its participation on or involvement in other regional environmental groups;
- C. Communicate Andover's open space assets regionally as well as locally;
- D. Consider the establishment of a farmer's market or other agricultural program which would promote the agricultural use of private or public land while providing a much-needed service for the region.

GOAL #6 - MAKE GOOD USE OF SCARCE RESOURCES

This means better interagency planning and coordination as well as cooperation with other holders of open space available for public use such as AVIS, the Department of Environmental Management of the Commonwealth, and the Trustees of Reservations. The working relationships among these groups should continue to be cultivated. Planning for better protection and utilization of resources should be developed.

Objectives:

- A. Continue to facilitate the sharing of open space and recreation areas among the different agencies of the town;
- B. Maintain and improve working relationships of town agencies with other holders and managers of open space and active recreation facilities. Included are AVIS, Trustees of Reservations, State Department of Environmental Management, Phillips Academy, YMCA, the regional vocational school, and local schools.

GOAL #7 - Provide Better Management of Existing Areas

In this time of shrinking public financial support, funds for care and maintenance are amongst the first items to be excised from the budget. Management strategies must be devised to close the gap. Otherwise, increasing urbanization spells deterioration of existing facilities and open space because

of overuse, vandalism, litter, and other abuses. Andover should protect its already considerable investment in open space.

Objectives:

- A. Improve the maintenance program for the town's active recreation areas such as playfields and playgrounds;
- B. Establish a maintenance fund for limited care of reservations. Support appropriate maintenance funding for Community Services facilities;
- C. Provide proper signs to identify conservation and recreation areas and to control uses;
- D. Continue efforts to develop better management strategies using volunteers wherever possible;
- E. Be alert to abuses such as litter and vandalism and employ appropriate enforcement techniques;
- F. Balance uses so as to provide maximum enjoyment and employment of open spaces;
- G. Try to make users of the town's open space aware of their responsibility for its proper management.

GOAL #8 - BE BALANCED

This goal means trying to achieve spatial balance of open space and recreational opportunities throughout the town and ensuring that all age and social groups are served. It means using open space acquisition to shape, provide context for, and serve the demands development is bringing, rather than to block development.

Objectives:

- A. Seek to acquire open space in neighborhoods where it is lacking or limited;
- B. Identify deficiencies in outdoor recreation opportunities and develop strategies to correct them;
- C. Provide opportunities for the enjoyment of open space by all groups and ages, including elderly and handicapped citizens.

GOAL # 9 - IMPROVE AND INCREASE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Objectives:

- A. Implement long-range plans for the Andover Recreation Park;
- B. Create neighborhood parks for non-organized recreational use in areas of town lacking playground areas, picnic sites, and pedestrian and recreation amenities;
- C. Examine town-wide needs for indoor recreation space for all ages;
- D. Improve and expand upon outdoor recreation programs and facilities.

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The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs approved the Andover Open Space and Recreation Plan in September 2001.

Please note that this is a working document and that several of the objectives are complete and others are ongoing.